ED 506: Concepts and Issues in Social Science Research  
Fall 2011 • Mon. 2:00-4:40pm • Dewey Hall B-315

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Email: nares@warner.rochester.edu  
Office: Dewey Hall 1-160H  
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course takes a conceptual approach to examining the enterprise of social science research, particularly as it relates to the field of educational studies. The course will provide an introduction to the relations among theory, research, and application, to issues involved in designing and evaluating research, and to research as a social and cultural process. Examples drawn from a variety of fields in education and related disciplines will be used to illustrate basic principles of inquiry. Some questions that will guide our work include:

- What is a theoretical framework? What purpose does it serve in research?
- Where do research questions come from? How are they related to theoretical frameworks and methodologies?
- What is a methodology? How does it relate to a theoretical framework? How do methods relate to methodology?

Course Goals

- Develop a firm understanding of conceptual issues critical in the development and practice of social science research
- Build skills to support informed consumption and evaluation of published research
- Deepen understanding and build skills in research as a process (e.g., posing research questions, reviewing literature, building a theoretical framework, choosing methodologies)
- Develop and demonstrate understanding of the ethical and procedural issues surrounding research with human subjects
- Develop understanding of a range of research endeavors, including basic and applied research, as well as program evaluation
- Practice writing in scholarly academic genres

Required Texts

- Readings posted on Blackboard at http://my.rochester.edu
Course Requirements

Below are brief descriptions of the graded assignments for this course. Additional instructions and criteria will be distributed in class and/or posted on the course Blackboard site, which can be accessed at http://my.rochester.edu.

PLEASE NOTE: No late assignments will be accepted, and attendance for all class sessions is expected. Please notify me in advance if you have problems with either of these requirements.

Posing questions (40 points): For each class period, come to class with 1-3 questions that emerged from the readings that we can use for class discussion (small group and/or whole class). These will be turned in each class meeting.

Research journal (50 points) – The journal is submitted via Blackboard twice during the course (see below for due dates). There are 3 components to the journal:

1. Reflective writing in response to readings, class readings, discussions and activities, other coursework that connect to your own thinking about the proposal for this class, as well as your eventual dissertation study or another study of interest to you. Entries should be made a minimum of once per week.

2. Responses to peers’ feedback on your presentations of your developing research proposal (see calendar for dates). As a class, we will develop topics on which peers and I will give written comments.

3. A critical analysis of a research study published in a peer-reviewed journal in your area of interest, as well as what your analysis helps you understand or consider for your own research. Use questions posed below and on Blackboard to organize your critique. Be sure that the summary includes a description of research questions, theoretical frame, methods, and findings. You have an opportunity to submit a second critical analysis if your first attempt doesn’t meet expectations.

Directions for Article Critique

Provide a brief summary (~2 pages) of the article that includes a description of the research questions, theoretical framework, methods, and findings. Please then answer the following questions (these are great for subheadings for your paper):

- How well do the authors describe their rationale, theory, and/or point of view for the study? (Note: they don’t have to or often include all of these elements, so report and critique what they do provide)
- How well do the authors present their hypotheses, questions, models, or claims? – Substantive? Contestable? Specific?
- Research design
  - How clearly are the participants described? – what else might you want to know about them to help you judge this research?
  - How detailed is the description of the research setting? -- again, what else might you want to know?
  - How well are the data sources, measures, and observations described? – given the journal’s audience how clear are they?
  - How clearly are data collection and analyses described? – again, given the audience, how clear?
• Do the conclusions follow from the data analyses and results, or do the authors “gallop away” from their results?
• Are implications for future research and/or for practice tied to the results and conclusions? Are they substantive?

Collaborative research proposal and presentations (150 points): The guidelines used for critiquing research articles can also guide you in constructing this proposal.
In groups of three or four, choose a topic of common interest and co-construct:
– An evolving concept map, outline, flow chart or some other method of representing your research questions, ideas, connections to relevant literatures, possible methodologies, etc. You will present this to the class twice during the semester; the presentations should last no more than 10-15 minutes.
– One to two research questions
– A formal, written proposal (APA style), to include the following sections,
  o Introduction: describe the project, pose 1-2 research questions, identify the audience, and give rationale for significance to the field
  o Literature review (at least 10 sources, 8 eight of which are peer-reviewed journal articles), 5-7 pages
  o Theoretical framework
  o Methods (not data analysis techniques nor specific instruments, but setting, participants, data sources, as well as rationale for each)
  o Concluding remarks, including implications and limitations
  o References
– Poster session for the Warner community at the end-of-semester poster session (3-fold posters required; sorry, no Power Point allowed)

Human subjects protection program (25 points):
Complete the HUMAN SUBJECTS PROTECTION PROGRAM (EPRP) and take their test (details will be available in class). Turn your test in to Prof. Ares; she will send the class’ tests to the appropriate staff person for evaluation. URL - for the EPRP exam
http://www.rochester.edu/ohsp/certification/eprp.html

Course grading:
Standard criterion-referenced: A = 94% and above; A- = 90-93%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 84-86%; B- = 80-83%; C+ = 77-80%; C = 74-76%; C- = 70-73%

A small statement about reading:
As advanced graduate students, it is imperative that you get in the habit of reading and digesting large amounts of research literature. As scholars, administrators, counselors, teachers, etc., improving our practice means accessing new and innovative research studies. I hold the firm expectation that, as graduate students, you will read all of the assigned material and you will be ready to discuss the readings in depth. Most weeks contain 3 research articles, but a few weeks require 4 or maybe more readings. Secure enough time to read the assigned material thoroughly. Take close notes. This habit will serve you well as you progress towards degree completion.

A statement about inclusivity and class climate:
It is expected that our class meetings are supportive environments. A fundamental part of our class work is committing ourselves to fostering an inclusive, anti-oppressive environment where each person takes responsibility for her/his language, actions and interactions. In this course, an anti-oppressive environment means that we work against language, actions, interactions and ideologies that hurt people. It is important that we listen to each other about how our words and
actions are affecting one another and that we talk about a class moment in which something may feel hurtful. This course is an opportunity to practice these social justice skills in our social interactions and academic work.

Course Policies

- Cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, laptops, and similar devices should not be used during class for non-class related purposes.

- Students who need accommodations for learning differences or other special needs must provide documentation to Brenda Grosswirth, the Disability Resource Coordinator for the Warner School. She can be found in Dewey Hall, room 2-161F, and she can be reached via phone (585-275-1009) or email (brenda.grosswirth@rochester.edu).

Academic Honesty

Students in this course will be expected to abide by the University of Rochester’s Academic Honesty Policy for Graduate Studies. Any suspected violations of this policy will be referred to the Associate Dean of the Warner School. The policy is available in the Graduate Student Bulletin (available at http://www.rochester.edu/GradBulletin/PDFbulletin/GradBul08-10forWeb.pdf). Please make sure that you have reviewed this policy, and that you see the instructor if you have any questions.

COURSE SCHEDULE (tentative, of course!)

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<tr>
<th>Sept. 10</th>
<th>Course Introduction</th>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Introductions; overview of course; introduction to research journal assignment; survey of student interests, backgrounds; beginning discussions about proposal groups</em></td>
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<th>Sept. 17</th>
<th>The Research Process</th>
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<td><em>Time in class to form research proposal groups and to begin discussing what to focus on in proposal</em></td>
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**AND CHOOSE ONE:**  
| Oct. 1     | Interests, Topics, Resources               | Library tour – meet promptly at 2:00pm at Rush Rhees Library, main foyer  
*Time to browse for resources for proposal and to continue discussion in groups about proposal topic*  
**Readings**  
• Booth et al., *The craft of research*, Parts I, II |
| Oct. 8     | Claims, Warrants, Qualifications, Critiques | **Readings**  
• Booth et al., *The Craft of Research*, Part III  
• *Research article provided to you to practice identifying claims, evidence, etc.* |
| Oct. 15    | Quantitative Approaches                    | *First presentations of concept maps for research proposal assignment*  
*First submission of research journal—submit via Blackboard*  
**Readings**  
[Read pp. 1-41]  
• Shadish, W.R., & Luellen, J.K. (2006). Quasi-experimental design. In J.L. Green,
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 22</td>
<td>Quantitative Approaches (cont.)</td>
<td>First presentations of concept maps for research proposal assignment, continued</td>
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<td>Oct. 29</td>
<td>Qualitative Approaches</td>
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<td>Nov. 5</td>
<td>Qualitative Approaches (cont.)</td>
<td>Second presentations of concept maps for research proposal assignment</td>
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| Nov. 12 | **Program Evaluation Research**  
*Second presentations of concept maps for research proposal assignment, continued* |
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<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<td>Nov. 19</td>
<td><strong>Mixed Methods and Qualitative/Quantitative: Dichotomy or Complementarity?</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Proposal Groups</strong></td>
<td>Groups work on proposals and meet with Prof. Ares</td>
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| Nov. 26 | **Feminist, “Endarkened,” and Other “Alternative” Epistemologies**  
*Second submission of research journal, including article critique—submit via Blackboard* |
<p>| <strong>Readings</strong> | |
| <strong>I will assign you one of the following:</strong> | |</p>
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<th>Dec. 3</th>
<th>Ethics in research</th>
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<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<th>Dec. 10</th>
<th>Wrap-up**</th>
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<td><em>Research proposal presentations—Final poster session</em></td>
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<td><em>Research proposals due</em></td>
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**This session is on Friday, Dec. 10 so that we can combine our session with the other section of ED 506 and with ED 406 students.**